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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

29 August 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Free World Reaction to the Berlin Crisis

The Uncommitted Nations

1. For the uncommitted states the most important aspect of the Berlin question is whether there will be war or peace. They view it as a power conflict between the great nations rather than as a moral or legal issue. They are not moved by appeals to the principles of freedom and self-determination and they are not concerned over the fate of the inhabitants of a remote European city. Many of them are not convinced that the Communist Bloc poses any greater threat to their own interests than does the West. Even those who do recognize the universal danger inherent in Communist aggressiveness and expansionism find it difficult to see any connection between the Soviet threat to Berlin and the maintenance of their own liberty and independence.

2. Many find the USSR's desire to sign a peace treaty and turn its responsibilities in regard to Berlin over to the GDR

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simple and reasonable -- especially in view of what they consider to be a shift in the balance of power between the USSR and the West in the 16 years since the end of World War II. While they seek to maintain their neutralist position by avoiding taking sides with either the Bloc or the West, all the uncommitted nations see their own primary interest as preservation of the peace -- in some cases, at almost any price.

3. The positions taken to date by the press and leaders of the uncommitted nations reflect these fundamental beliefs, and in all likelihood, so will their future actions. Prime Minister Nehru has discussed the Berlin crisis in detail, appearing sometimes to favor one side and sometimes the other. However, his basic position is represented by his statement: "All other problems sink into almost insignificance when we face the problem of war and peace in the world -- and that is hanging in the balance today in Central Europe." Virtually identical sentiments have been expressed in many world capitals, e.g., Colombo, Djakarta, Bogota, Cairo, Rabat, and Lagos.

Major Allies

4. Our NATO allies, together with Australia and New Zealand, generally understand the issues involved in the Berlin crisis and accept the necessity that the West take a strong stand under US leadership. Nevertheless, there is a strong undercurrent of feeling, notably as voiced by the British Government and much of its public, that some solution must be found through negotiation even if this involves recognition of the GDR. Part of this arises from reluctance of most Europeans to incur great risk in defense of the Germans. Thus, there is likely to be increasing heavy pressure from our Western allies for accommodation should Western firmness, instead of exercising a sobering effect on the Soviets, appear to be leading to a military showdown.

Other US Friends and Allies

5. Most of the friends and allies of the West in the rest of the world accept the West's stand to date as a necessary demonstration of courage and determination and many are heartened by what they see as an assertion of vigorous and confident US leadership. Many of them, however, have little knowledge or interest in the details of the Berlin crisis. None of them sees anything to be

gained from a war over Berlin in which they might be engulfed. Consequently, most will be eager to assist in negotiations which might lead to a settlement of the present crisis without a surrender by the West. (Argentina, for example, is already seeking ways to bring the Berlin question to the UN in a context favorable to the West.)

The Outlook

6. The outlook is for an increasing clamor from the uncommitted nations for an easing of the threat to the peace through negotiations. Strong demands will almost certainly emanate from the Belgrade Conference scheduled to begin on 1 September. Because of its composition and leadership, this conference, insofar as it goes into the substance of the Berlin question, is more likely to incline toward the Soviet than the Western position. However, the principal actors (the UAR, Yugoslavia, and India) and many of the other participants will want to avoid developments at the conference which will heighten international tension. They will try to keep official references to Berlin as general and non-controversial as possible; they will probably seek to devise strategy for bringing the matter into the UN and for handling it there.

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7. It seems almost inevitable that in one way or another the Berlin issue will come into the UN -- the best place for nations other than the great powers to influence the outcome of the crisis. Here the uncommitted nations will be seeking a mutually acceptable solution or at least postponement of the climax as presently anticipated. Although the USSR will be called upon to make some concessions, the heaviest pressure will probably be directed against the Western Powers as the defenders of the status quo and as the side most susceptible to being talked into modifications of its original position. There will be some support for preserving Western access to Berlin, but most countries will be easily satisfied on this score and particularly will see no reason why this problem cannot be settled through negotiations with the GDR.

8. Should no way out of the crisis be found in the UN and should the prospects for a violent confrontation appear to be increasing, some neutralists might urge the US to accept the Soviet position. It is possible that some US friends or allies, perhaps as a result of internal crises, might seek to disassociate themselves from the West, denying the use of military bases or facilities. Most, however, we believe, would keep

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their nerve and somewhat reluctantly take the defense measures dictated by their various circumstances. All, of course, will continue to hope for and seek ways to promote a last-minute reopening of negotiations.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES:



ABBOT SMITH
Acting Chairman

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